Applied Specialties in Psychology

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BOX 8.4 DIARY OF A PSYCHOLOGY TEACHER WHO TEACHES ARCHITECTS

KATHRYN ANTHONY

Teaching psychology to architects is a fascinating, but not an easy, task. It requires creativity, imagination, resourcefulness, and a bit of patience. It can be extremely rewarding, however, to introduce students to a new way of thinking about design.

I have taught both undergraduate and graduate architecture students, as well as professional architects, landscape architects, interior designers, and city planners. My courses are called Environmental Psychology, Behavioral Factors in Architecture, and Social and Cultural Factors in Architectural and Urban Design. Along with other specialists in structures, environmental controls, and interior architecture, I have also team-taught a design lecture series.

The emphasis of my courses has been on applied, rather than pure, research. In my lecture series to undergraduate design classes, I have been called upon to serve as a "behavioral consultant." The coordinator for the course assigns a design project, such as a small urban museum, in which case my role would be to teach about social and psychological issues in museum design. Some of the other design projects have included a small restaurant and nightclub, a new School of Environmental Design, a city hall, and a high-rise "mixed-use" building containing shops, restaurants, offices, and apartment units.

My creativity is called upon in that virtually no one has written specifically about behavioral issues in these building types. Consequently, I must often extract information and present findings from comparable research settings, or else I simply raise questions about issues I believe are important. For example, what different types of users frequent a museum? What kinds of special environmental needs might these groups have?

My next task is to teach architects the tools with which to answer these questions and test some of their assumptions about design. Among the exercises I have given are learn-

A second exception may occur in the development of curricula in schools of business. It appears that many such institutions are revising their ways of teaching. It is possible that these revisions could lead to the addition of positions for persons whose central training is in psychology.

■ CONTRIBUTION OF PSYCHOLOGY TO EDUCATION: WHAT IS TAUGHT

The previous sections are marked by both generality and diversity. In order to discuss the salient characteristics of the teaching of psychology, generalities have been stated, yet in order to show the many ways in which psychology is taught, diversity has been evident. Reasons for both the generality and diversity

commonly used in psychological research, but rarely in architectural teaching and practice. I often ask students to observe how people behave in a given setting such as a park, a hotel lobby, or a school lounge, and to record what they are doing and where. Does a certain spot seem to encourage or discourage people from talking to one another? Is there any one location in the setting void of activity? Then I may ask them to interview users by asking them such questions as "What do you like most about this building?" "What do you like least?" "What changes, if any, could be made to improve this building?"

I also ask students to study the physical traces in the environment, to try to understand clues to previous behavior in places. Are there any worn spots on the grass? Any graffiti on the walls? Any pieces of litter on the sidewalk? What can these pieces of information tell us about how people use the environment?

After completing these exercises, I often ask students to redesign a setting in light of what they have learned about people's behavior in and attitudes about the place. We sometimes compare drawings of a project before and after research.

One of the lessons I have learned from teaching psychology to designers is that I must be willing to teach a new vocabulary. Words like "cognition" and "perception" are new to architecture students, and it is important that they understand their meaning. Many have never heard of Carl Jung, whose notions of the "archetype" have provided some basis for research in environmental symbolism.

Similarly, I have had to learn to communicate in the language of designers, too. Designers generally communicate visually, through drawings, sketches, plans, and slides, while psychologists communicate verbally, through writing. As a result I have tried to incorporate slides into almost all my lectures. I also have attempted to become relatively fluent in architectural lingo by familiarizing myself with well-known architects and their work.

My biggest challenge in teaching psychology to architects has been to try to think like a designer. My academic training has taught me to examine research questions that are of theoretical interest. In my current position, however, I must also put myself in the architects' shoes and center my teaching around architecturally relevant issues.

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can be found in the origins of psychology itself. We began the chapter by asking: Who teaches psychology to whom? Let us now consider what is taught, for in so doing we shall come to see why the teaching of psychology can involve different topics and be done for different purposes.

The sources of the psychology we teach can be found chiefly in the last century in European intellectual thought. There were four traditions of thinking that contributed to psychology. The first tradition is from physiology, for it examines human behavior in terms of what is sensed and perceived. This tradition today is seen in the interest of psychology in physiology, the sensory systems, neurology, and the workings of the brain. A second tradition is from philosophy, where the manner in which the mind makes associations, forgets and remembers, and interprets experiences is emphasized. This tradition is now